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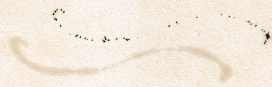
THE BULLETIN

P. O. B. 67 STATION D
New York City

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MARK ON A SHAM WAR
Illusion and Reality, Past and Present

IN the popular view, since September 1939, the "democratic" nations have been engaged in open warfare with Nazi Germany, and since June 22, 1941, have been acting as "Allies" of the Soviet Union which has been invaded by the German Army. In this periodical, we have been maintaining, on the basis of substantiating evidence, that the apparent two-year "war" of the "democracies" against Nazi Germany, and the newly-hatched "alliance" of the "democracies" with the Stalin gang are both cut-and-out shams camouflaging the basic line of inter-imperialist collaboration in the spread of fascism and launching of the attack on the Soviet Union. With the exception of the war of Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union which is utterly and completely a war to the death, the present situation is not to be judged by its surface features.

The average mind, and even the mind of the average advanced class-conscious worker finds it hard to believe that sham wars and alliances can exist at all. Nevertheless, history holds more than one such situation: deliberately-concocted sham war, sham alliances, sham enmities. To date we have dealt mainly with the present; we have based our analysis of the present on its specific features and have drawn our conclusions wholly from them. Let us, however, take a look into the past to see what history has to say about the matter. Not that the past is any proof of the present — we do

not for a moment have any such thing in mind. But a view of the past will establish whether or not history contains the record of sham war concealing underlying collaboration of the "opponents," and sham alliances camouflaging basic betrayal of one "ally" by the other.

Strikingly enough, it was Marx who first presented an analysis of a sham war. This is contained in his newspaper articles on the so-called Crimean War of 1853-56. We shall use as our source a collection of newspaper articles of the Crimean War period, called The Eastern Question, which contains many of Marx's articles dealing with that situation. The analysis and conclusions of the other articles are the same as Marx's. In what follows, we shall present a survey of the materials of this volume. *

* In order to verify precisely which articles in The Eastern Question were actually written by Marx himself, we have checked this volume against the German and French editions of Riazanov's Collected Works of Karl Marx.

ILLUSION AND REALITY IN THE PAST

General Background of the Crimean War

FOR some years prior to the actual outbreak of hostilities between Russia and Turkey in 1853, there existed a secret understanding between the Russian Czar and the British imperialists to partition the territories of Turkey, the so-called "sick man of Europe." Pursuing British imperialist policy, the London Times on the eve of the war openly called for the dismemberment of Turkey. Marx refers to this in his article of April 19, 1853 reproduced in The Eastern Question:

"We find The Times advocating the dismemberment of Turkey, and proclaiming the unfitness of the Turkish race to govern any longer in that beautiful corner of Europe." (p. 23.)*

This was before the Czar actually came upon the scene with military action against Turkey. In July 1853, the Czar's armies were thrust across the border into what was then Turkish territory, the Danubian Principalities of Moldavia-Wallachia. This was a real war, for the Czar had every intention of seizing Turkish territory, and Turkey, of resisting such seizure. As a result of the Russian invasion, the British masses whose sentiments had always been against the Czar, the bloody gendarme of Europe, reacted with extreme hostility against this Czarist move for expansion. The British imperialists were in a tight spot; on the one hand, they were secretly in cahoots with the Czar, and on the other hand, they were confronted by the anti-Russian sentiments of the British masses.

Marx quoted a dispatch by a certain Prince Lieven who discussed his

* In every case, when we quote an article written by Marx himself, we shall so specify.

interview with the British Prime Minister, Lord Aberdeen. Marx cited this dispatch at the time the Czar attacked Turkey:

"Lord Aberdeen reiterated in his interview with me the assurance that at no period it had entered into the intentions of England to seek a quarrel with Russia — that he feared that the position of the English Ministry was not well understood at St. Petersburg — that he found himself in a delicate situation. Public opinion was always ready to burst forth against Russia. The British government could not constantly brave it; and it would be dangerous to excite it on questions that touch so nearly the national prejudices." (Ibid., pp. 52-53. Marx's emphasis.)

To extricate themselves from this dilemma, the British imperialists organized what was purported to be a coalition of Powers which included France and Austria, ostensibly to act as supporters of Turkey. An article in The Eastern Question contains an exposure of the real intentions of this coalition, namely, to paralyze the Turkish army and to help the Czar in his military adventure:

"From the leaders of The Times and Morning Chronicle, we might infer if there could exist any doubt about the intention of the Coalition, that it will try to the utmost to prevent war, to resume negotiations, to kill time, to paralyze the Sultan's army, and to support the Czar in the Principalities." (Ibid., pp. 143-144. Our emphasis.)

The Turks replied to the Czar's invasion by declaring war against him in October 1853. It did not take long before the Turkish armies began to drive back the Czar's troops. In the face of the Czar's reverses, the British imperialists introduced a maneuver to halt the Turks' advance. This sly

tactic was to urge the Turks to accept an armistice. Marx clearly shows the purpose of this armistice:

"The fact of England urging upon Turkey an armistice at a moment when this cannot but assist the Czar in gaining time to concentrate his troops.... such are the circumstances which induce the public to direct anew their attention to Windsor Castle and to suspect it of a secret conspiracy with the Courts of Brussels, Vienna, and St. Petersburg." (Ibid., pp. 181-2. Our emphasis)

Another article in The Eastern Question addressed to The Daily Tribune forewarns the readers of future double-dealings on the part of the British rulers!

"Your readers have followed, step by step, the diplomatic movements of the Coalition Cabinet, and they will not be surprised at any new attempt, on the part of the Palmerstons and the Aberdeens, to back the Czar under the pretext of protecting Turkey and securing the peace of Europe." (Ibid., p. 171.)

Such was the background of the situation which produced the British-led Coalition in "support" of Turkey and "opposed" to the Czar.

The Famous Battle of Sinope

AROUND the middle of November, 1853, the Russian fleet was hovering near Sinope, a Turkish port on the Black Sea. Not far away, in the Bosphorus, were concentrated the British and French fleets. The sentiment of the European masses, especially the British, had been steadily rising against the Czar. The show of naval strength by the "friends" of Turkey — the British and French — ostensibly directed against the Czar, was made to quiet the anti-Czar animus of the masses. The Turkish fleet, according to Marx, was powerful enough to deal with the Czar's navy, even to

the possibility of annihilating it. (The Eastern Question, p. 443.) With the aid of land-batteries the Turkish fleet was in a position to defeat the attackers. But the British "advisers" of the Sultan caused the Turkish fleet to be stationed in the harbor of Sinope in such a way that the Turkish land-batteries were unable to fire on the approaching Russian fleet because they would be hitting their own ships. The carrying out of such "advice" was a tremendous blunder on the part of the Turks. As a result, the Turkish fleet was destroyed. The whole episode has become known in history as the "butchery at Sinope." Marx maintained that the whole affair can be explained only by the interference of the British and French connivers:

"The battle of Sinope was the result of such an unparalleled series of blunders on the part of the Turks that the whole affair can only be explained by the mischievous interference of Western diplomacy or by the collusion with the Russians of some parties in Constantinople connected with the French and English Embassies." (Ibid., p. 194.)

Marx reported that after the Russian victory at Sinope, the Czar received congratulations — from a French ambassador, a representative of a country in the "anti"-Russian coalition:

"After Sinope victory, Castlereagh, French ambassador, sent congratulations to Czar." (Ibid., p. 228.)

The Simulated War Against the Czar Begins

AFTER the massacre at Sinope, mass sentiment in England for action against the Czar reached an extremely high pitch. The British imperialists had to make it look as if they were yielding to this sentiment. Together with the French, war-like preparations were made and an expedi-

tionary force was made ready to sail to the East. Marx, however, saw through the intentions of the British imperialists and stigmatized the expedition as a fraud:

"The Anglo-French expedition may be set down as far as the present intentions of the British Government go, as another piece of humbug." (Ibid., p. 272.)

Another dispatch included in The Eastern Question clearly indicates that the only kind of "war" against the Czar the British could engage in, was a sham one:

"Can there be any greater delusion than believing this Ministry, after the revelations made by the blue books, to have been all at once transformed, not only into a warlike Ministry, but into a Ministry that could undertake any war against Russia, except a simulated one, or one carried on in the very interests of the enemy against whom it is ostensibly directed?" (Ibid. pp. 365-6.)

On March 27, 1854, England and France made a paper declaration of war against Russia.

History was to show that the imperialists can officially declare war in order to conceal their policy of collaboration.

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The Next Phase of the Sham War

[T must not be imagined that the Turks failed entirely to perceive the two-faced game of their "Allies," the British and French imperialists. As a matter of fact, a short while after the British and French declared war on Russia, a feeling of suspicion and mistrust arose among the Turks, as is indicated in the dispatch of April 21, 1854 in The Eastern Question:

"The feeling of doubt, mistrust,

and hostility against their Western allies is gaining possession of the Turks. They begin to look on France and England as more dangerous enemies than the Czar himself." (p. 344.)

It must be constantly borne in mind that the Turks were entirely serious in their war with Russia; it was only their "Allies" who were shamming. The Anglo-French imperialists, however, had to cook up an impression that they were waging a real war against Czarist Russia. Their officers were impatient and bored by inactivity. The sailors and soldiers of the Anglo-French forces believed they were in a real war against the Czar, as did the British and French workers. In order to keep up this illusion, the "Allied" governments arranged military expeditions which were harmless to the Czar, yet seemingly serious. Such was the case with the bombardment and destruction of the Russian fortress of Bomarsund by the Anglo-French naval forces:

"Bomarsund, then, was only bombarded for the amusement of the fleet, and as a concession to the impatience and ennui of the officers." (Ibid., p. 470.)

Despite the fact that some destruction was being wrought to fool the soldiers and sailors and the masses back home, the basic policy of the Anglo-French rulers was to keep their troops as inactive as possible. Still, they had to be given something to do. Hence, they were set to digging field-works:

"If a proof was wanted that neither the British nor the French Government had any intention of doing friend Nicholas any serious harm, it is given to the very blindest in their way of spending the time of the troops. In order to have a pretext to keep their troops away from the field of action, the allied commanders set them to dig a continuous line of field works across the neck of the Thracian Chersonesus." (Ibid., pp. 364-5.)

There developed a typical "Sitzkrieg" reminiscent of the so-called Western Front in the so-called Second World War after Hitler's occupation of Poland. Marx sarcastically describes the "Sitzkrieg" of his day:

"There they are, eighty or ninety thousand English and French soldiers, at Varna, commanded by old Wellington's late military secretary and by a Marshal of France (whose greatest exploits, it is true, were performed in London pawnshops) — there they are, the French doing nothing and the British helping them as fast as they can; and as they may think this sort of business not exactly honourable, the fleets are come up to Baltchik Roads to have a look at them and to see which of the two armies can enjoy the dolce far niente [pleasant idleness] with the greater decorum." (Ibid., p. 451.)

Some very subtle tactics for preventing action against the Russians were devised by the Anglo-French generals. For example, the Turks, who were good at holding fortifications, were deliberately thrown into the open field where they were not apt fighters. The French, on the other hand, who were excellent in the open field, were cooped up behind fortifications:

"Now, if there is any sense in this warfare, the chiefs must know that what the Turks are deficient in is the art of maneuvering in the open field, in which the Anglo-French troops are masters; and that, on the other hand, the Turks are fit for the defense of walls, ramparts, and even breaches, against stormers in a degree which neither the British nor the French can lay claim to. Therefore and because Varna, with a Turkish garrison, did that which no fortress before it had ever done, — that is, hold out for twenty-nine days after three practicable breaches had been made in the ramparts, — therefore, the half-disciplined Turks are taken out of Varna, and sent to meet the Russians in the open field, while the well-drilled French, brilliant

in attack but unsteady in lengthy defence, are sent to guard the ramparts of Varna." (Ibid., p. 365. Emphasis in original.)

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A Means of Relieving Boredom — The Crimean Expedition

THE British and particularly the French soldiers were dying of cholera and other diseases in Turkish-controlled Bulgaria. This naturally produced terrific ferment amongst the troops who eventually threatened to burst the bonds of discipline. It even reached the point where the French soldiers were openly threatening their officers. It was to avert the danger of mutiny amongst the idle and diseased troops that the Anglo-French soldiers were shipped off to the Crimea:

"Africa was a hotter country than Bulgaria, and the Sahara is a good deal less pleasant than even the Dobrudscha; but no such mortalities ever marked the paths of African conquest as attended the repose of Devna, and the easy reconnoitering marches around Kustendji. Cavaignac, Bedeau, Changarnier, Lamoriciere led them through greater dangers with far less loss at a time when Espinasse and Leroy St. Arnaud were still buried in the obscurity from which political infamies alone could raise them. Accordingly, the Zouaves, the men who had done most work and smelt most powder, the best representatives of the African army rose in a body and shouted, 'A bas les singes! Il nous faut Lamoriciere!' (Down with the apes! Give us Lamoriciere!) His Imperial Majesty, Napoleon III, the head and soul of this actual official apery of a great past must have felt when this came to his knowledge that the cry of the Zouaves was for him 'the beginning of the end.' At Varna, it had a magic effect. We may say that it was the chief cause of the

expedition to the Crimea." (Ibid., pp. 477-8. Our emphasis.)

Thus we see that it was the unruly behavior of the Zouaves that compelled the imperialists to concoct the expedition to the Crimea.

The commander of the French troops, St. Arnaud, was particularly hated by his soldiers, and was in danger of attack by them. The cocked up "action" of the expedition to the Crimea was in the first instance designed to keep St. Arnaud from being lynched by his own soldiers:

"Thus we see that this grandiloquent expedition to the Crimea with six hundred ships and sixty thousand soldiers, with three siege trains and nobody knows how many field pieces, instead of being the deliberate result of skilful movements, prepared scientifically long before hand, is nothing but a hurried coup de tete [desperate deed] undertaken to save Leroy Saint Arnaud from being massacred by his own soldiers." (Ibid., p. 478.)

Thus originated the famous Crimean "War"! It should be carefully observed that though the whole expedition, as far as having any real military purpose against Russia, was concerned, was an out-and-out sham, nevertheless it involved the movement of what was in those days huge bodies of troops and stores of equipment. The very hugeness of this simulated expedition, its serious-appearing outward forms, served to deceive the soldiers and the masses at home, and saved the day for the imperialists.

Marx points out that the seat of operation chosen for the next phase — the Crimea — was militarily unimportant. (The Eastern Question, pp. 489-90.) The chief military sections of the Czar's empire were fortified Poland, the Baltic area, and the Moscow region. Marx even maintained that the Czar could lose the whole of south Russia without being weakened. It is obvious, therefore, why, in this sham war, the Crimea was selected as the

place where to dispel the mutinous sentiments of the "Allied" troops and at the same time to bolster the illusion back home that the "war" against Russia was being pursued in earnest.

It is interesting to note that the Russians, who held the Crimea to begin with, offered no resistance to the landing of the Anglo-French troops. In quite a leisurely fashion, and with the dawdling so characteristic of this "war," the troops were finally arrayed before the Russian fortifications.

While the Russians permitted Turkey's "Allies" to get a foothold in the peninsula, the "Allies," on their part, reciprocated, and allowed the Russians to reinforce their garrison in Sebastopol (The Eastern Question, p. 494).

Since the Anglo-French troops had been sent to the Crimea to give them "something to do," some battles were staged, such as that of the Alma, Inkerman, Balaclava, and the "siege" of Sebastopol.

In the standard bourgeois history books, the "fall" of Sebastopol (Sept. 8, 1855), an Anglo-French "victory," is designated as the end of the war between Turkey and her "Allies," and Czarist Russia. Actually, it was only Turkey's sham Allies who withdrew at this point. The war between Russia and Turkey continued. It so happens that at the same time that the Anglo-French were kept busy at Sebastopol, the Russians were laying siege to the important Turkish fortress of Kars. Kars is located in Turkish Asia Minor, in what is known as Armenia. Already in June, 1855, the British were aware of the fact that the besieged fortress of Kars would be lost by the Turks unless relief were sent to it. The Porte, as the Turkish Government was called, made efforts to relieve Kars. The British countered by thwarting these efforts of the Turks:

"One glance at the Kars papers will satisfy everybody as to the constant efforts made by the British Government to thwart the projects of the Porte." (Ibid., p. 635.)

The inevitable result of this sabotage against Turkey, carried on by her "Allies," was that on November 26, 1855, over two months after the "fall" of Sebastopol, the Russians captured Kars. The fall of Kars brought to a close this complex historical drama. That it ended on the note of a Russian victory was entirely in keeping with the plans of Turkey's pretended "Allies" and the Court of St. Petersburg. It set the stage for calling a peace conference. In one of his articles of this period, Marx evaluates the fall of Kars in the history of the sham war of the Anglo-French "against" Russia:

"The fall of Kars is the turning point in the history of the sham war against Russia. Without the fall of Kars no Five Points, no Conferences, no Treaty of Paris; in one word, no sham peace." (Ibid., p. 611. Our emphasis.)

In connection with the British-French betrayal of their "ally," the Turks, at Kars, it is worthwhile to note another tactic used to hamstring Turkey in her war against Russia. The British Parliament granted a loan of 5,000,000 pounds sterling to the Turkish Government. "All its operations depended upon receiving a supply of it [i.e., money] at once." (Ibid., p. 647.) Had the Turks obtained these funds at once, they might have defeated the Russians at Kars. Therefore, in line with its policy of preventing a Russian defeat, the British Government paid out in dribblets less than two-fifths of the loan. Thus the British imperialists helped the Czar to deal the final blow to their Turkish "ally."

Despite the original conspiracy between the British and Russian imperialists for the partition of Turkey, dating back to 1846, despite all the British collaboration with the Czar during this entire period from 1853-56, with all the consistent sabotage of the military efforts of the Turks whom the British imperialists were pretending to save, a complete dismemberment of European Turkey was not achieved by the diplomats at the Paris

Peace Conference of 1856. The most that the British and Russian imperialists were able to agree upon in 1856 was to deprive the Sultan of his control of the Danubian Principalities and to compel him to cede Kars to the Czar. In order to camouflage the fact that European Turkey was being partitioned, the Czar temporarily ceded Bessarabia to a European Concert of Powers, only to get it back several years later. The further dismemberment of European Turkey was achieved at the Congress of Berlin in 1878.

That Marx considered the "war" of 1854-56 between the Anglo-French imperialists and the Czar to be a sham has been shown. It is important to note that though the governments of the major Powers were secretly in collaboration against Turkey, and though the "war" between them was a sham, the destruction in life and property was enormous. In the battles that were staged between the Anglo-French and Russian troops to cover up the Anglo-French imperialists' collaboration with the Czar, scores of thousands of British and French soldiers lost their lives. The British Government spent 69,000,000 pounds on this sham war; the French Government, 93,000,000 pounds.

Marx was not deceived by the furor of battle and the terrific destruction of life and property; he was guided by the policy of the Anglo-French imperialists which revealed to him their collaboration with the Czar. Marx saw the Anglo-French military operations and their protestations of "support" to Turkey as a camouflage for this back-stage collaboration. *

* It is worthwhile to mention the statement of Franz Mehring, the chief biographer of Marx, on the subject of Marx's views on the so-called Crimean War:—"Despite the million lives and the millions of pounds which the war cost, both Marx and Engels regarded it as a pseudo-war as far as France and, in particular, England were concerned." (Franz Mehring, Karl Marx, Chapter "The Crimean War and the Crisis," p. 267. Our emphasis.)

THE DANGER OF TAKING THINGS FOR GRANTED

THE history of capitalism shows that the bourgeoisie can conduct either a real war such as that of 1914-1918, or a sham war such as the Crimean "War."

Since the declaration of war in September 1939, the situation is presented to the world at large as a real war, a Second World War, between what was initially the Anglo-French camp and the so-called Axis camp. Does the "Second World War" fall into the category of real war or of sham war? We have seen that battles and the destruction of life and property are not in themselves a criterion of the existence of a real war. What determines whether there is a real war or a sham one is the policy of the imperialists. If the policy of the bourgeoisie is sham war, then the battles, destruction, etc., are a necessary cover of the underlying collaboration.

When Marx was faced with a sham war, he drew his conclusions from its concrete political and military features. When Lenin in 1914-1918 was faced with a real war, again it was the concrete features of the specific situation which formed the basis of his conclusions.

Today, as always, a Marxist position can be established only by an examination of the concrete, specific features of reality. Drawing mechanical analogies to the past, or taking things for granted about the present, will never provide the workers with a correct understanding. We must therefore investigate the present situation itself to determine which category the so-called "Second World War" falls into.

ILLUSION AND REALITY IN THE PRESENT

IN THE BULLETIN for the past three years, we have presented considerable material on the background conditions and on the actual unfolding of the so-called "Second World War." The survey which follows is based on the concrete materials already accumulated.

When in September 1939, the Nazis invaded Poland, we saw that Poland's "Allies," the British and French imperialists, rendered absolutely no support of any kind to Poland. Poland, despite every effort to resist, was rapidly crushed. Why was it that the British and French "Allies" of Poland did not aid Poland? Let us for a moment look back at the period of history preceding September 1939, for in reality, the roots of those events extend quite far back.

The successful overthrow of the Russian bourgeoisie in 1917 forced the international imperialists to combine

in an attempt to destroy the Soviet Republic. Despite their efforts, they failed due to the collapse of capitalism in Central Europe, the aid to the Soviets on the part of the workers of many capitalist countries and the heroic resistance against imperialist intervention of the Soviet masses led by Lenin.

Following this failure, the chief problems the international imperialists faced was to stabilize the tottering capitalist system, to attempt to bring Russia back into their orbit and protect their shaken power. Many imperialist statesmen realized that their system would never survive another shock similar to the one of 1914-1918.

The problem of securing the political stability of their power the imperialists have been solving through the means of Fascism. This method of

imperialist rule has been steadily spreading, aided by the Stalinist and other opportunist misleadership.

The renewed military attempt against Russia could be staged only by forging a weapon powerful enough to hurl at the Soviet Republic with reasonable assurance of victory for imperialism. Only Germany, with its vast, modern industrial machine located in the heart of the European continent, could serve as an effective basis for the anti-Soviet Union weapon. But German imperialism had been beaten down, disarmed, and weakened by the war of 1914-1918. And Germany was the weakest link both economically and politically in the rusty chain of capitalism. Hence the task of world imperialism — a task undertaken not willingly, but under historical compulsion — was two-fold — to establish and support Fascism in Germany and to rebuild the might of the German bourgeoisie for the attack upon the Soviet Union. From a policy of squeezing every ounce of wealth possible out of German economy in the form of "reparations," the British, French and American financial powers gradually turned to a policy of pumping money into Nazi Germany, of rebuilding German economy. Taking the next logical step, the international bankers sanctioned the establishment of the Nazi Army.

Entrenching the Nazis in Germany, however, was not enough. The continent of Europe had to be put at the disposal of the Nazi military machine, in order to make it the powerful spearhead of the assault on the Soviet Union. A way to the East had to be opened for the German forces. By 1938, the wedge to the East began to put in its appearance. Austria was given to Germany with the tacit consent of the other imperialist powers. During the Munich days of September 1938, the Eastward drive was extended. In order to camouflage the purpose of the Munich maneuver and prevent the masses, and particularly the class-conscious workers, from understanding it, the cry was raised that Hitler was being "appeased" to "prevent war." The purpose was to Fascistize Europe and to facilitate war against the Soviet Union.

Still Nazi Germany was separated from the borders of the Soviet Union. Poland was in the way. Could the imperialists merely continue their previous tactics and openly turn Poland over to the Hitler forces and repeat the story that again Hitler was being "appeased"? Even during the Munich days, despite all the skillful camouflage tactics used by the imperialists, the indignation of the masses was intense. The "appeasement" story wore thin. Had the imperialists simply permitted Hitler to seize Poland without even pretending to do anything about it, they would have faced a profound crisis, a clear realization on the part of the masses that Hitler was being given a free hand against the small nations and the Soviet Union. No, the "democratic" imperialists had to use some stronger "medicine" than the "appeasement" nostrum.

They officially declared war on Hitler, but whether the cry was "appeasement" or "war," the policy of the imperialists remained the same. In shifting from "appeasement" to "war," only the tactics of the imperialists changed, not their basic aim. Like the cry of "appeasement," that of "war" was a sham, designed to cover up the spreading of the Fascist order, and the forging of the anti-Soviet Union weapon, the Nazi armed forces.

Thus it was that when Poland was attacked the Anglo-French imperialists did not lift a finger to hinder the Nazi war machine. The gigantic Anglo-French naval forces, the combined "Allied" air fleets, the huge French land forces, were held inactive, while real war raged in Poland. With Poland decimated, the German and Russian borders became contiguous.

The imperialist rear, however, was not yet completely organized economically and politically. Further vital steps had to be taken in the West. To freeze the situation in the East meanwhile, Stalin was allowed to take part of Poland. This served to drag Stalin into the situation — to all appearances as a partner of Hitler, to the bargain. Stalin's opportunist-ic grab of part of Poland profoundly

weakened the international position of the Soviet Union through loss of sympathy amongst the masses. The momentary sacrifice which the imperialists made in letting Stalin have part of Poland was well worth the cost to them. Militarily, as later developments decisively proved, this temporary acquisition was of little or no value to Stalin.

With the destruction of Poland, there set in the period now known as the "Sitzkrieg." Gigantic Anglo-French military forces were lined up in the West along the German border. For the most part, the soldiers spent their time playing checkers, reading detective stories, picking fruits, and being bored. The New York Times was constrained to report: "This queer war is now entering its fourth month and the British Army in France is faced with the only formidable enemy it has yet encountered — boredom." This lasted for about three-quarters of a year.

The excuses cooked up to account for the "Sitzkrieg" have not yet been compiled. They would make a fairly large book of very interesting reading. The whole volume would be a monument to the inventive genius of the imperialist and pseudo-Marxist spokesmen whose purpose it was to conceal the fact that the real reason for the "Sitzkrieg" was the sham nature of the "war," the Munich policy which the imperialists were continuing under a new cover.

If the Anglo-French and the German armies had simply continued to spend months after months picking potatoes, the game would sooner or later have been given away. "Action" had to be provided to make the "war" look real. In April 1940, the German army was brought into Norway. This move was trumped up as an event of epoch-making importance. Churchill shouted: "I consider that Hitler's action in invading Norway and Scandinavia is as great a strategic and political error as that committed by Napoleon when he invaded Spain." (The New York Times, April 13, 1940.) There was no end to what the "democratic" imperialists "threatened" to do to Hitler's forces.

Churchill thundered: "All German ships in the Skagerrak and Kattegat will be sunk." (Ibid.). The bourgeois papers ^{about}blared military and naval action in Norway and its waters. But very gradually, startling facts began to pop out. Though Churchill "promised" all German ships would be sunk, the papers began to carry reports that a steady stream of water-borne Nazi troops was arriving in Norway — unhindered by the huge British and the French Navy. "Nazis Driven from Bergen, Trondheim; Allies Battle Enemy Ships in Skagerrak, Force Way to Oslo, Order Germans Out," bellowed The New York Times of April 11, 1940. But Leland Stowe, an American journalist on the scene, reported that the British Expeditionary Force sent to Norway consisted of—

"...fewer than 1,500 men. They were dumped into Norway's deep snows and quagmires of April slush without a single anti-aircraft gun, without one squadron of supporting airplanes, without a single piece of field artillery... The majority of these young Britishers averaged only one year of military service." (New York Post, April 23, 1940.)

Subsequent reports revealed that a large German expeditionary force had been allowed to enter Norway, despite the fact that the British Government expected Hitler's move a month before it took place. The whole affair was now palmed off in the capitalist papers as a "mystery":

"To many observers it remains a mystery how the British, whose fleet had been carefully watching Norwegian territorial waters for weeks, could have let a large German expeditionary force slip through and seize the five principal seaports of Norway as bases of operation against Britain, especially since Prime Minister Chamberlain said this week that the British Government had been expecting such a stroke since February." (The New York Times, May 5, 1940.)

The "strange" lack of naval, aerial and military opposition on the part of the Anglo-French imperialists can be explained only on the basis of

their political line.

Such "war" fakery as the Norwegian affair was not the only technique used. Sinking of ships, occasional bombings, and some shooting here and there on the Western Front also put in their appearance. The masses, utterly deceived by the imperialists and the pseudo-Marxist opportunists, naturally took the surface features at their face value. "Shooting means war" — what could be more convincing, especially to those who take surface features for granted and fail to investigate the underlying policy. But behind the smokescreen of this cooked-up "action" in Norway, an epoch-making scheme was being prepared.

In the rear of the German forces lurked a most powerful potential danger — the French working class. Though the French proletariat was misled by opportunism which enabled the French bourgeoisie to recover somewhat after the mass upsurge of 1936, the crisis between the two classes was still hanging fire. In the present period of history, only the institution of a fascist regime provides the bourgeoisie with a basis of political stabilization which offers some degree of safety for them. The establishment of fascism had long been the hope, the dream and the vital need of the French imperialists.

For years, millions of French workers—who imagined the Soviet Union to be a land of Socialism, — they knew nothing about Stalin's bureaucratic depredations, — yearned for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie in France itself. For the bourgeoisie merely to have Hitler assault the Soviet Union and do no more than continue the "Sitzkrieg" in the West, would have resulted in a more profound repercussions in the highly class-conscious French proletariat. A mass outburst had to be forestalled. A transformation of the regime to fascism which would crush and devastate the French proletariat was required as a prerequisite to the actual invasion of the Soviet Union. But an attempt by a French fascist movement would have precipitated a civil war in France on an even larger scale than in Spain.

The imperialists found a different and safer method of establishing fascism in France. They decided to bring in the Nazis and use them as the means of establishing fascism. Such a maneuver would accomplish several things for the bourgeoisie. First, since it was a German force which was bringing in fascism, the masses would at least for a period remain tied to the French bourgeoisie; it must be remembered that the French masses imagined there was real war with Hitler. Organized in and around the French imperialist army, the masses could very easily be held in check, drugged by the illusion that Hitler was being resisted. At the same time, the French army was completely under the domination of the bourgeoisie. All that the French bourgeoisie had to do was to open the door for the Nazis and bring them into France. With the masses completely paralyzed from every direction there would be neither civil war against the French bourgeoisie nor resistance to the Nazi forces.

On May 10, 1940, Hitler's forces began the advance through the Lowlands, skirting around the Maginot Line. Very significantly, John Cudahy, the American Ambassador at Brussels, reported the invasion to Roosevelt several hours before it occurred (New York Post, May 10, 1940). And still more: "Even the date — May 10 — had been whispered around Paris for the last 10 days, and only the censor prevented your correspondent from mentioning it." (Ibid.)

With the British Navy in complete control of the waters around Holland and Belgium — "German forces were landed along the Dutch coast at dawn from a fleet of transports under guard of Nazi warships and the whole Dutch coast was occupied by noon, it is claimed here — under the very noses of the British." (New York Post, May 10, 1940. Our emphasis.)

Again, the capitalist papers had roaring headlines about vast action against the Nazi Army. The first reports shouted that "The British threw enormous armed strength against the Germans in the invaded lowlands of Holland and Belgium" (U. P. dispatch,

Daily News, May 14, 1940.) Soon it turned out, however, that the total British forces sent into Holland numbered only about 700 men (New York Times, May 26, 1940). The total airforce sent by the British to the Dutch numbered three planes (Ibid.). Winkelman, the Commander of the Dutch Army, declared: "We were left to ourselves, and so I had to make the grave decision which was a very difficult one for me — to lay down our arms." (The New York Times, May 14, 1940.) Without making the slightest effort to halt the Nazi advance, the whole "Allied" army in Belgium rolled back to the Channel ports and the French frontier.

For many years the French factories were producing the most powerful artillery. France became famous for its artillery. But in the "Second World War," all of a sudden the enormous French artillery forces "disappeared." During the Nazi entrance into the Lowlands and France, a reporter was constrained to ask: "What has happened to the French artillery?" (New York Times, May 22, 1940.) The famous French 75s were not in evidence. The French super-tanks in the neighborhood of fifty tons also were invisible and unheard from. No "Allied" airforce put in its appearance. Even if it be argued that the "Allied" airforce was not as powerful as the one possessed by the Nazis, still it must be admitted that the "Allies" must have had at least some airplanes. But when an Associated Press reporter interviewed an eyewitness, "This witness (pro-Ally) added that 'we neither saw nor heard a single Allied bomber over the main highway just behind the front either day or night.'" (New York Post, May 31, 1940.) Louis P. Lochner, a reporter in the field, stated: "We kept straining our eyes in vain for Allied planes." (New York Post, May 23, 1940.) The Nazi leaders put on an air of "wonder": "Reports from the German side express wonder at the absence of Allied artillery and warplanes." (The New York Times, May 23, 1940.)

In the north moving back to the Channel ports was a combined British-French-Belgian army, the total amount-

ing to about 1,000,000 men. To the south lay the chief military might of France, an intact army of four to five million men. Between the two, in some "mysterious" way, appeared a corridor of 35-50 miles in width. Into this corridor rushed a light-armed German force estimated at most at about 60,000 men:

"Advices here indicated that only 50,000 to 60,000 Germans were involved in the race against a retreat of nearly 1,000,000 Allied troops." (The New York Times, May 22, 1940.)

It was this light-armed body of about sixty thousand men mounted on bicycles and motorcycles which "drove" the "Allied" army of about one million men to the Channel ports! Henri Bidou, a French military expert, proclaimed the situation "without analogy in the history of war." (New York Times, May 23, 1940.) Contrary to the early noise generally made by newspaper and radio commentators, later reports indicated that this light-armed German body of troops — "Does not seem to have been followed by heavier columns." (New York Times, May 23, 1940.) Such was the "mystery" of the Corridor to the Channel Ports.

The British Expeditionary Force "driven" with the rest by the 50-60,000 light-armed Nazi troops, left the Continent at Dunkerque. The Dunkerque affair provided Hitler's army with a huge supply of materials of war to prepare him for the assault on the Stalinized workers State. The British Expeditionary Force had dumped on the continent with enormous military equipment. From all indications the British had no intention of using this equipment against the Nazis. "Nazis Win Booty for 40 Divisions," declared a headline in The World-Telegram of June 5, 1940. Materials of every conceivable type were left by the British in the Nazis' hands.

Meanwhile to the south there was still the huge and intact French Army. During the war of 1914-1918, the great fortress of Verdun stood as an uncon-

querable bulwark against the Kaiser's battering ram. Nearly a million men lost their lives before Verdun and yet it was not taken. Since 1918, Verdun had been modernized and vastly increased in power. But in the "Second World War" there occurred at Verdun the "miracle of miracles." The Nazis "attacked," occupied and passed Verdun in twenty four hours (New York Times, June 18, 1940). This was simply the time it took the Nazi troops to walk through the place; even a tourist could not have done it in less than a day.

The French soldiers were paralyzed by the imperialist oligarchy and its General Staff. At first, as usual, the bourgeois and opportunist papers were howling about the "Battle of France," which was alleged to be going on and to be the greatest battle in the history of war. But again, when the smokescreen cleared away, the exact opposite was seen to be the case. Less than two months after the "Battle of France" was reported to have taken place, the bourgeois press let slip the admission:-

"It now seems quite clear that there never was a Battle of France, a battle for Paris, or whatever it was called in the days before the country's collapse." (The New York Herald Tribune, July 23, 1940.)

Refugees overtaken on the roads of the German advance stated:

"They never saw any real fighting. And on two of these roads the Germans advanced without tanks and armored cars; their vanguard was composed of bicycle troops and their striking power was mobile artillery." (Ibid. Our emphasis.)

As regards the French Army:

"At first it was believed that they were simply driven back by a highly mechanized army that rolled forward on a wave of flame and steel. But this theory has been discarded, for except along the Somme and the Aisne and at isolated spots, there is no evidence of battle." (Ibid. Our emphasis.)

Such was the "Battle of France." The French Army was not defeated. It was withdrawn intact, by virtue of the policy of the Anglo-French imperialists.

With the establishment of the Nazi forces in France, the real immediate business on the imperialist agenda began -- the complete subjugation of the French proletariat, especially of its class-conscious, vanguard section. It was for this primarily that the whole maneuver of the "Battle of France" was executed with all its "my series" and "miracles."

It was not until a year after the Nazi occupation of France that the attack on the Soviet Union was launched. This interval was spent in intense preparations. The "war" continued meanwhile in its minor aspects, Africa and Greece. In previous issues of THE BULLETIN, the military fakery in Africa and Greece has been analyzed in considerable detail on the basis of concrete material from the reports of the capitalist press itself. The British pretense of "blockading" Germany has also been dealt with (See THE BULLETIN, January-March 1941, pp. 1-25; May 1941 pp. 1-11; June 1941, pp. 1-8.) By June 1941, the stage was set, and on June 22nd, the long-prepared, carefully organized invasion of the Soviet Union by the Nazi army began.

* * *

TODAY, the proletarian vanguard, in so far as it is organized at all, is in the clutches of the pseudo-Marxist system. This includes chiefly the pro-Stalin and the pro-Trotsky sections. The leaders of both these sections have been shouting about the "Second Imperialist War," fostering the illusion that the imperialists since September 1939 have been locked in combat as in 1914-1918. Stalin, of course, recently dropped his "anti-imperialist" noise, only to create the illusion of an "Alliance" with the "democracies." Both these sections, each from its own angle, have been concealing the fundamental features of the so-called "Second Imperialist War."

To this extent they have been, objectively speaking, facilitating the Fascist development and the attack on the Soviet Union. This is only one aspect of their opportunism, but it is a highly significant one. The elimination of these pseudo-Bolshevik poisons remains the chief immediate problem facing the proletarian vanguard, for upon this elimination de-

pends the re-crystallization of the proletarian vanguard around a genuine Marxist leadership and the development of a genuine struggle against the Fascist menace.

G. Crane

J. C. Hunter

THE SPREAD OF FASCISM —

AND THE ATTACK ON THE STALINIZED SOVIET UNION are being carried out through the collaboration of ALL the major imperialist powers. To conceal this collaboration there has been created what is variously called the "Second World War," the war of the "democracies" against the fascists, the inter-imperialist war, the war of the "free" versus the "totalitarian" powers, the war of the "defenders" against the "aggressors," and so forth. All these titles hide the fact that what is occurring amongst the imperialists is not war, but a sham made to appear like a real war. THE BULLETIN contains material exposing the frauds of the imperialists and their opportunist lackeys.

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